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11-27-73

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HIGH-SPIRITED IRISH COMEDY OPENS AT UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

"The Hostage", a raucous, rowdy, bawdy, rollicking comedy by contemporary Irish dramatist Brendan Behan, opens Thursday (Nov. 29) at the University of Montana. Presented by the UM Department of Drama, the show will run through Sunday (Dec. 2).

Directed by Alan Cook, associate professor in drama, "The Hostage" portrays life in a small Irish brothel and the hilarious and touching events surrounding a British soldier, played by Bill Tilton of Great Falls, who is held captive there. "The Hostage" teems with songs, dances, and Irish spirit in the grandest sense.

Jim Russel, Missoula native and 1972 graduate of Hellgate High School, portrays Monsewer, a converted Irishman who plays the bagpipes most inefficiently and who incorrigably believes that the "inhabitants" of the house are IRA members under his command. Two scurrilous characters, Meg and Pat, virtually run the house, despite the Monsewer and his outrageous commands. A "Sociable worker", determined to lead retired civil servant Mulleady out of what she considers to be the Sodom-and-Gomorra-like atmosphere of the house, is continually heard singing her self-righteous anthems. A wealth of lusty and notorious characters add to the atmosphere and income of the house, making sure that life is never dull for anyone living there.

The ever present pressure of the IRA and the anticipation of the hostage's fate lend excitement, suspense, and the wistful intrigue associated with Irish people to the production. Brendan Behan has endowed this play with fiery Irish tempers, Irish songs and the heart and soul of a people continually struggling for independence.

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